

SB1157



BIRMINGHAM GROUP
Health Services, Inc.

Providing Hope - Changing Lives...

Providing outpatient clinical case management, rehabilitation, domestic violence, and substance abuse prevention and education services to the Lower Naugatuck Valley and surrounding communities.

March 25, 2009

Dear Editor of the New Haven Register:

I was recently made aware that the New Haven Legal Assistance Association, as well as other organizations of its kind across the state, will be facing drastic budget cuts. As the director of a busy domestic violence program for the past 18 years, I am well aware of the excellent services that New Haven Legal Aid provides. In 1998, a partnership was formed between the New Haven Legal Assistance Association and the Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence so that the 18 domestic violence programs statewide would be able to provide civil legal assistance to those who could not afford legal services. Priorities for cases have included such issues as benefits, health care, disability, children's education and support, housing, representation in criminal hearings, service to undocumented immigrants and to the Hispanic community (a historically underserved population). Through the years, I have observed many success stories that have come about because an attorney from NHLA provided quality services on behalf of a victim. I have observed the look of relief on client's faces when they are told that an attorney who will advocate on their behalf is available immediately.

On a personal level, as the parent of an adult child who is severely disabled, I am again reminded all of the time of the commitment and incredible supports that are provided by attorneys of NHLA. It is through this support that my son is able to live independently, giving him some quality to his life.

Due to a crumbling economy, most of us are experiencing some difficulties in the day to day management of running a household. Some of us can make adjustments that will get us through the rough times. However, the poor will not have the same options. Cutting NHSA at a time when it is most needed would be devastating for the people that we jointly serve. The cuts come at a particularly bad time since the legal needs of our community will be increasing. I am sure that I am not alone as I speak out and advocate for the legislature to support an increase in funding for NHLA so that the low-income community will have the resources necessary to support their efforts to function with some quality to their life and that of their families.

Sincerely,

Susan DeLeon, LMFT
Director

The Umbrella

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